

- Analyze the purpose and audience in each writing situation (below).
- Use an appropriate academic genre (next page).
- Choose appropriate structure and content (p. 73).
- Use sources with integrity (p. 74).
- Use academic language (p. 76).
- Communicate effectively with instructors and classmates (p. 79).

Visit [MyWritingLab™](#) for more resources on academic writing.

When you take college courses, you enter a community of teachers and students whose basic goal is to share and build knowledge about a subject, whether it is English, history, engineering, or something else. You participate in this community by studying each subject, by asking questions, and by communicating your answers in writing. This chapter gives you ways to approach academic-writing situations and make a contribution to knowledge building.

### 9a Determining purpose and audience

Like any writing, academic writing occurs in a particular situation created by your assignment and by your subject, purpose, audience, and genre. The assignment and subject will be different for each project, but some generalizations can be made about the other elements. (If you haven't already done so, read 1 pp. 3–9 on writing situations and their elements.)

#### 1 Purpose

For most academic writing, your general purpose will be mainly explanatory or mainly argumentative. That is, you will aim to clarify your subject by analyzing, describing, or reporting on it so that readers understand it as you do, or you will aim to gain readers' agreement with a debatable idea about the subject. (See 1 pp. 6–7 for more on general purposes and pp. 104–13 for more on argument.)

Your specific purpose—including your subject and how you hope readers will respond—depends on the genre, the kind of writing that you're doing. (See the next page.) For instance, in a literature review for a biology class, you want readers to understand the research area you're covering, the recent contributions made by researchers, the issues needing further research, and the sources you consulted. Not coincidentally, these topics correspond to the major sections of a literature review. In following the standard format, you both help to define your purpose and begin to meet the discipline's (and thus your instructor's) expectations.